



5 of 9

frank MILLER

HELL and BACK

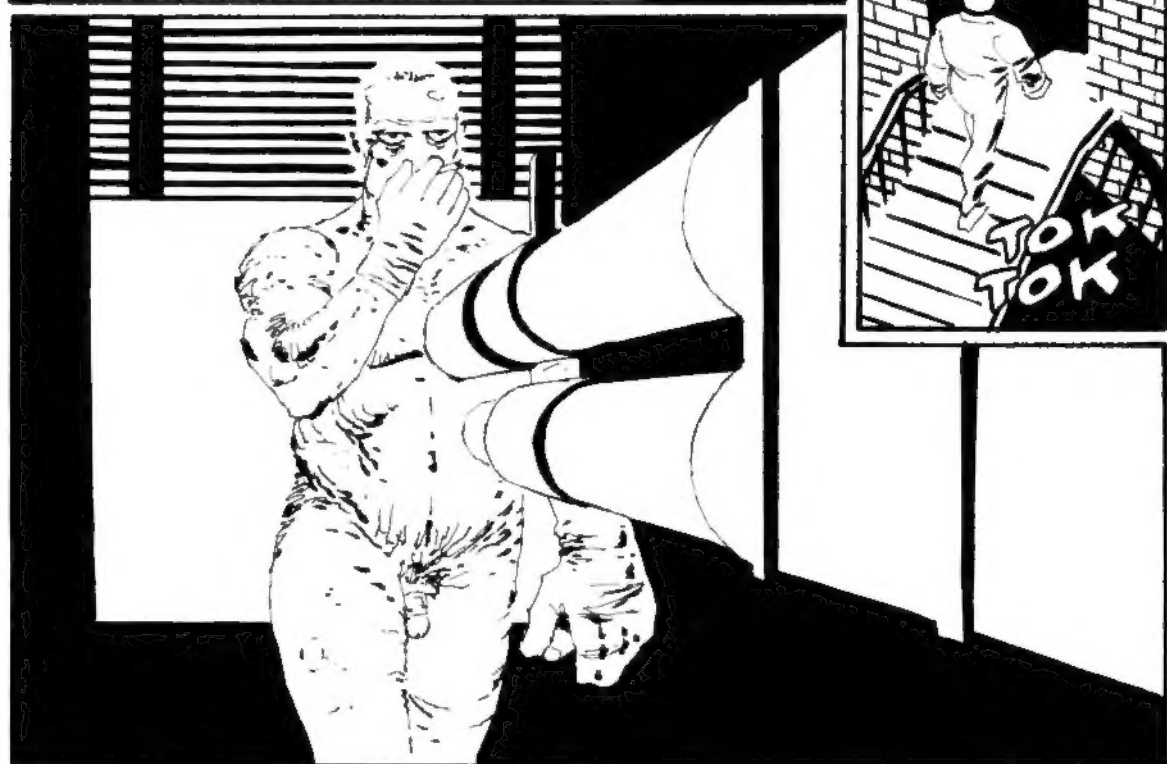
A **SIN CITY** love story

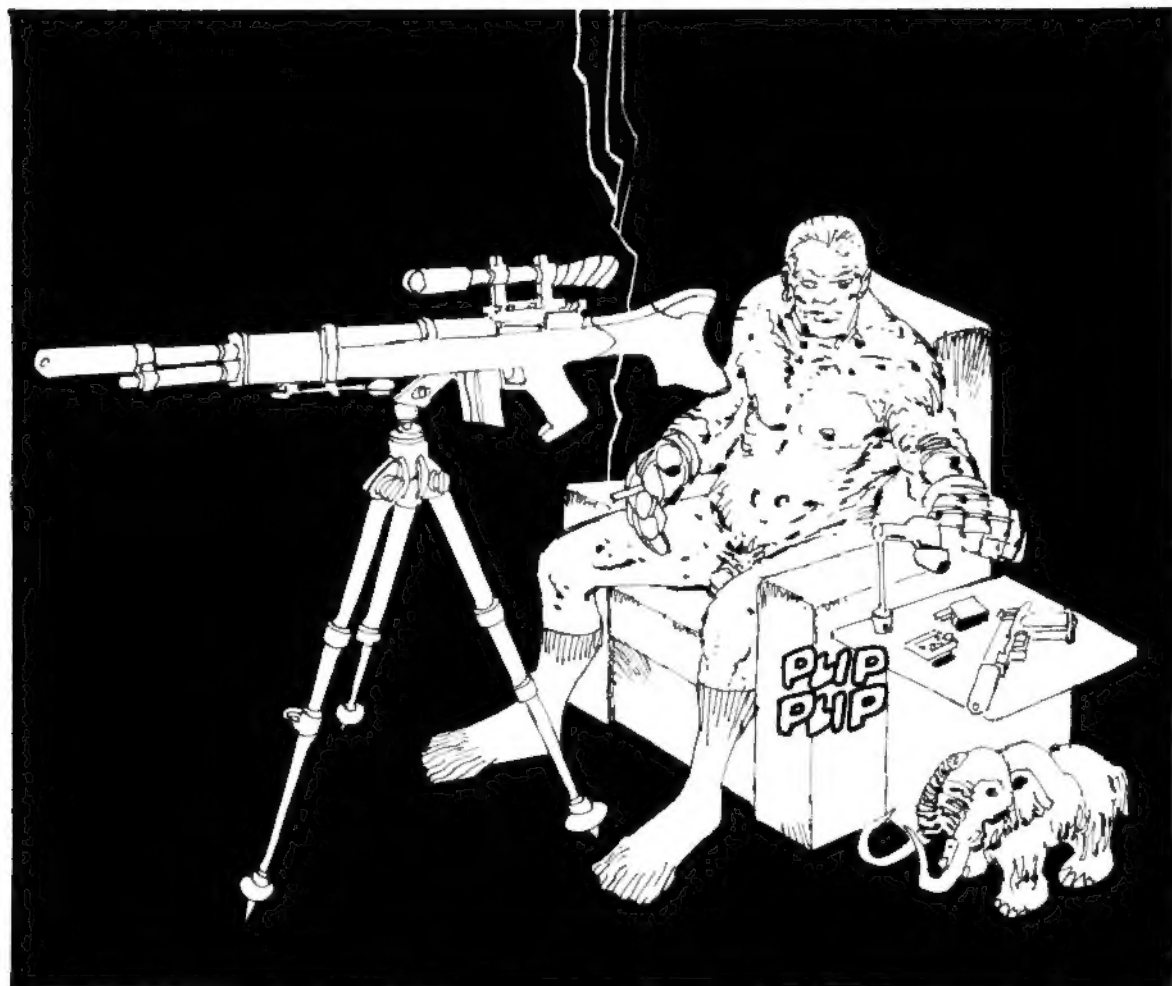


frank **MILLER** story & art
lynn **VARLEY** cover colors

diana **SCHUTZ** editor
cary **GRAZZINI** designer
mike **RICHARDSON** publisher









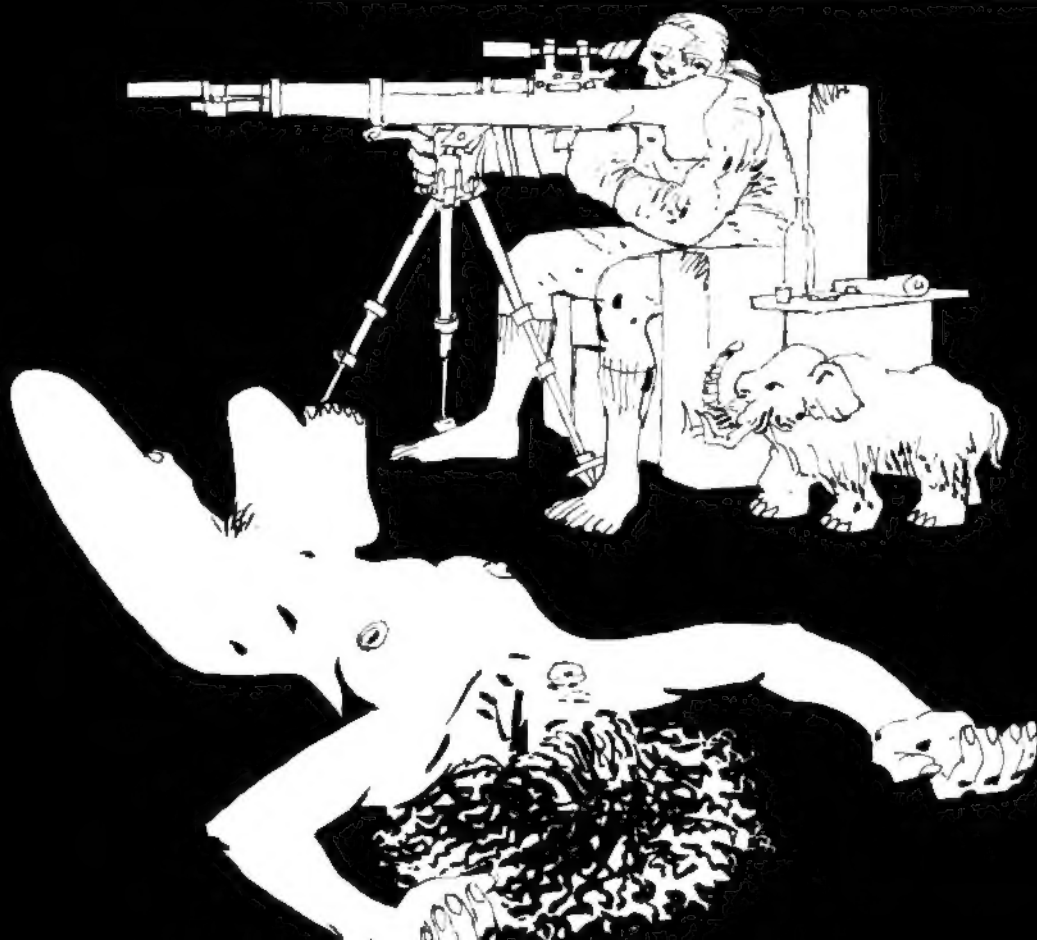
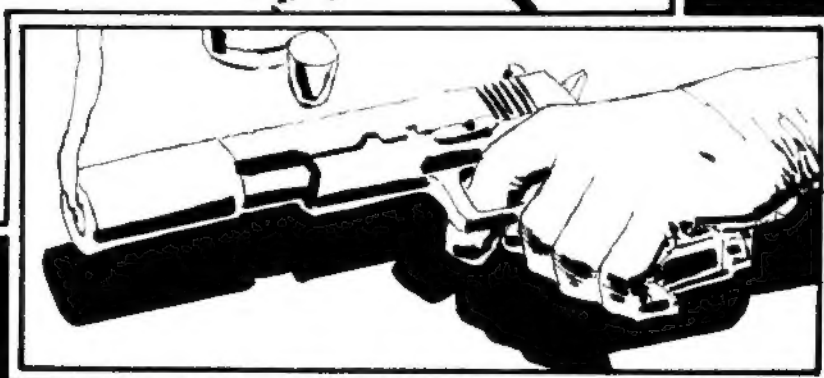
I DIDN'T
SHOW UP AT THAT
SALOON JUST
LOOKING FOR **LOVE**.
YOU GOT MY **HOSPI-**
TALITY, I WANT
YOUR **BOOZE**.

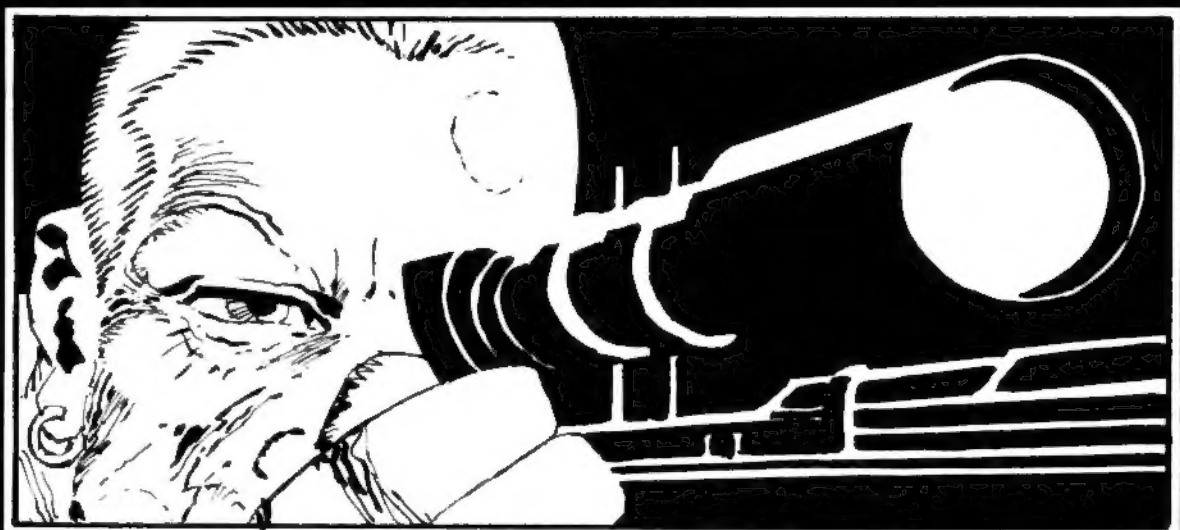
TOP IT
OFF WITH
A LITTLE
MORE OF THAT
OH-SO-FINE
BLOW OF
YOURS, AND I'LL
MAKE ALL YOUR
DREAMS
COME
TRUE.

HEY--WHAT HAPPENED
TO YOUR **BEARD**?
AND WHAT'S WITH
THOSE **GUNS**?



FUPP









THE NIGHT GOES
AS QUIET AS IT
EVER GETS.

NO
SIRENS
YET.

SHE
FINALLY
EXHALES.



WALLACE, YOU'RE
MAGNIFICENT.

UTTERLY
MAGNIFICENT.



DON'T PUT ON
YOUR COAT NOT
JUST YET STAY
AWH'LE

WE'VE GOT
TO GET GOING.
THERE'S NO REASON
TO THINK WE'RE
OUT OF DANGER.

GET
DRESSED--
AND BE CAREFUL
WHERE YOU WALK
YOU SHOULDN'T
BE EXPOSED

WE'VE JUST
HAD A SERIOUS
BONDING EX-
PERIENCE. I
WANT TO BE
EXPOSED--

I TRY NOT
TO LOOK
AT HER
SHE'S WAY
TOO EASY
ON THE
EYE

WAY
TOO
EASY

THERE'S NOTHING
LIKE A RAVISHINGLY
BEAUTIFUL NYM-
PHOMANIAC TO DIS-
TRACT A GUY

--TO
YOU I
WANT TO
BE EX-
POSED

THAT'S
NOT WHAT
I'M TALKING
ABOUT,
MA'AM

STAY
AWAY FROM
THE
WINDOWS



THERE'S NO
POINT IN
TALKING.

THERE'S NO
TIME FOR
TALKING



SPAK

WHEN YOU'RE
UP AGAINST A
CONSPIRACY..

SPAK

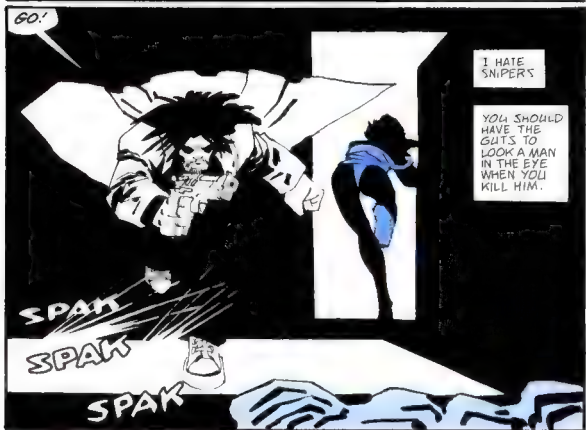
--YOU'RE
FIGHTING
ENEMIES
WHO RARELY
STRIKE
ALONE.





I'M
GOING TO
KILL
SOMEBODY.

PUT
YOUR
CLOTHES
ON



GO!

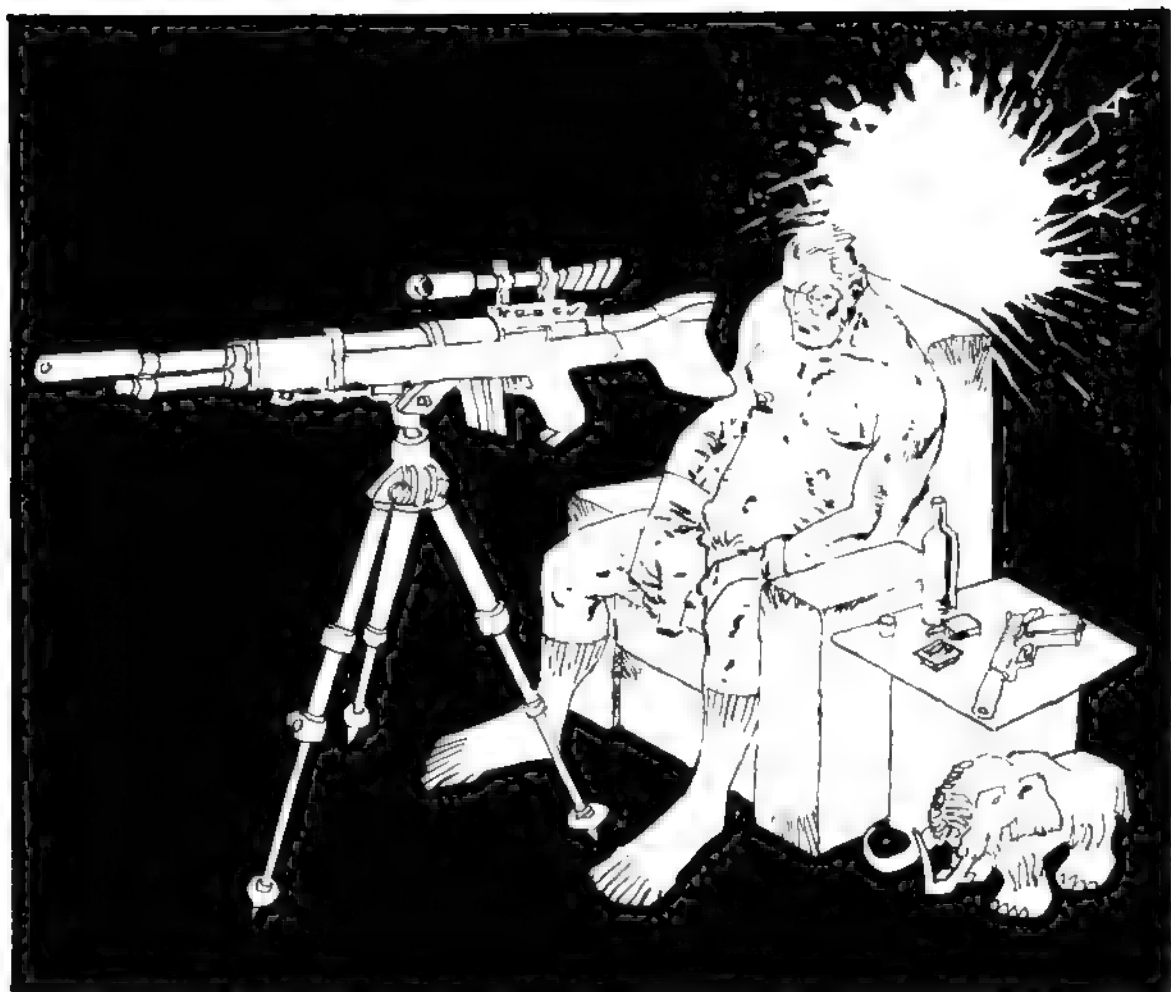
I HATE
SNIPERS

YOU SHOULD
HAVE THE
GUTS TO
LOOK A MAN
IN THE EYE
WHEN YOU
KILL HIM.









MY OUTFIT.
WHAT DO YOU
THINK?

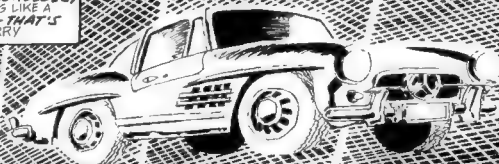
OOF!

YOU DIDN'T EVEN
LOOK.

SIRENS
NOW, DISTANT.

THE LEAST
OF MY
WORRIES

THAT MERCEDES,
ROARING LIKE A
LION--THAT'S
A WORRY



VROOM



YOU DRIVE LIKE
YOU FIGHT,
WALLACE



STRONG
FORCEFUL

AND SO
SKILLFUL.



THERE'S NO
WAY I'M
GOING TO
OUTRUN A
MERCEDES.

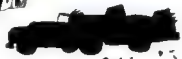
GET YOUR
HEAD DOWN

SURE
I WILL



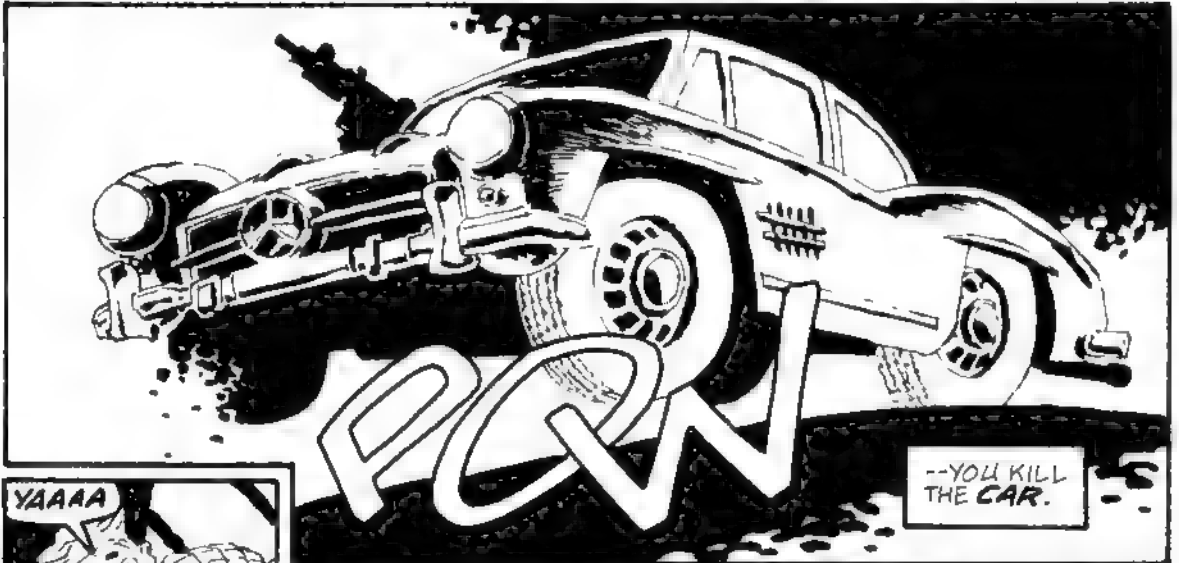
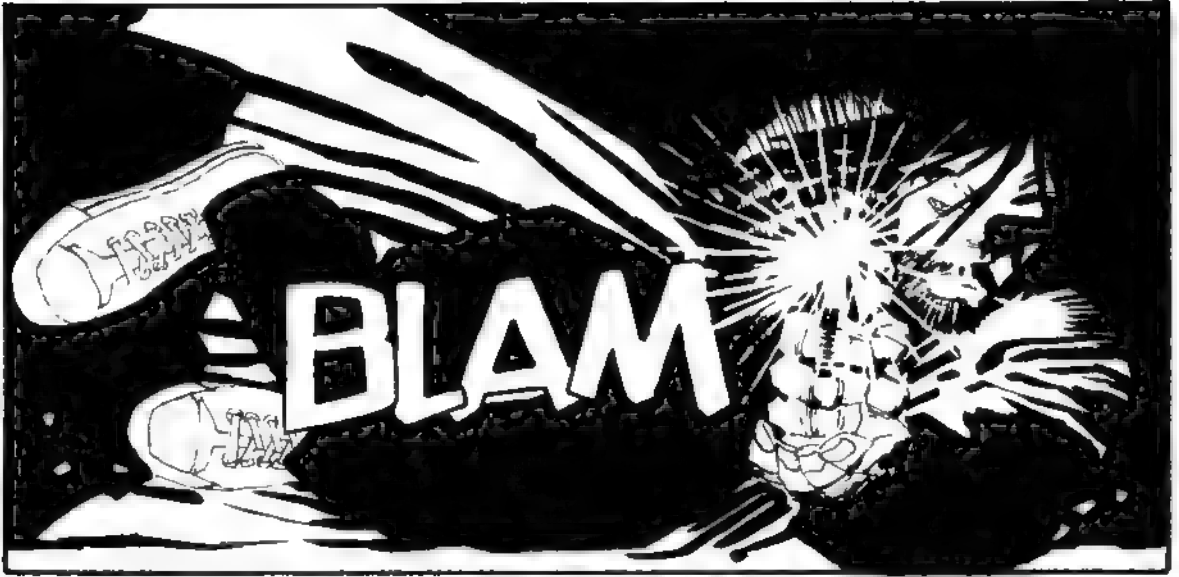
STOP IT
THAT'S NOT
WHAT I
MEANT.

SURE
IT IS.







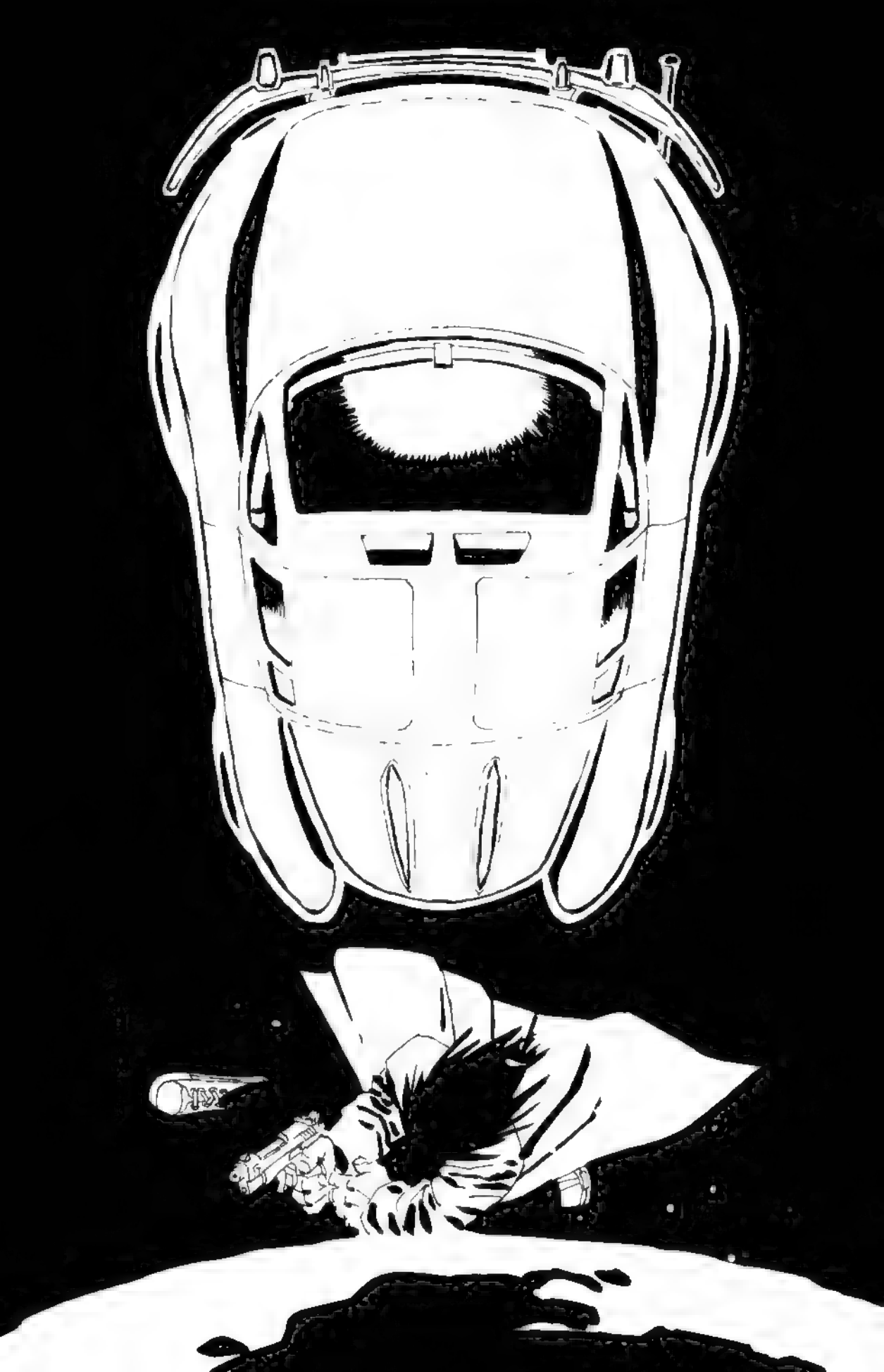


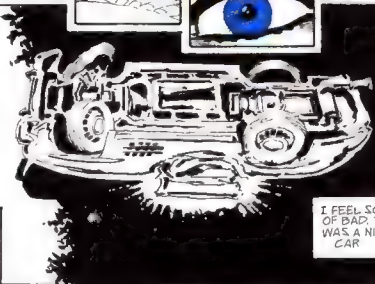
--YOU KILL
THE CAR.



THE REST
USUALLY
TAKES CARE
OF ITSELF





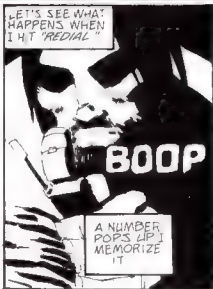


I FEEL SORT
OF BAD, THAT
WAS A NICE
CAR



THE OTHER
GUY WAS
AN IDIOT,
TOO

ONLY IDIOTS
TALK ON THE
PHONE
WHILE THEY
DRIVE.



LET'S SEE WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN
I HIT "REDIAL"

BOOP

A NUMBER
POPS UP I
MEMORIZE
IT

01-260

SLIGHT TRACE
OF A BRITISH
ACCENT.

REPORT



YOUR
MEN ARE
DEAD

DELIVER THE
WOMAN TO ME
OR I WILL FIND
YOU AND I WILL
KILL YOU



HE CLICKS
OFF

EVERY HOUR
I GET CLOSER
TO THE TRUTH

I **WILL** FIND
YOU, ESTHER

WHEREVER
YOU ARE

11-11-11



WRITE TO:

BLAM!

c/o DARK HORSE COMICS
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OR 97222
E-mail: dianas@darkhorse.com

We should've killed the damn thing when we had the chance.

We should've hammered a wooden stake through its heart and chopped its head off and stuffed it with garlic. We should've burned it at the stake and fed its ashes to rats.

We were complacent. It seemed so old, so puny, so laughably antique. A relic from the shameful era of Joe McCarthy and Hollywood blacklists and book burnings. It had kept shrinking, till it was a nearly unreadable blob on the corner of fewer and fewer comics.

One could easily forget what power it used to possess. In its day, it shut down the best line of comics ever produced. It dumbed down our art form for a generation. It was our constant declaration of self-contempt, our badge of disgrace.

And now publishers are signing back on, some willingly, some coerced by threats that their books won't make it to the newsstands.

The damn Comics Code. We didn't kill it. Shame on us.

On to more pleasant matters.

— FM

Joe Kucharski

joeski@clearlogic.com

At it again, I see. Another trip to the Sin City; another person caught up in a story not his own; another chance at escape that will be totally ignored. Yup. This is the town that I remember.

A love story, huh? Aren't they all? Sin City is a town where everything is exacerbated: the cars are old, the men hard, the women hot, and passion runs as red as the night is black. Everything is done out of love and passion in this town—be it hating, killing, whoring, or dancing.

With all history of this series intact, I am curious to see just what makes this love tale set apart from the others. One issue in and I'm glad to see some familiar denizens—Joe, the bartender with that unusual beak, and Peggy, the lush who longs for the unreachable past—as well as near-proper introductions of Wallace and Esther, the latest couple whom misfortune will visit.

Yes, that is a touch of negativity—and not on the story itself or its creator, but on the outcome. Face it, I don't read *Sin City* for happy endings, and I don't expect that those introduced are guaranteed survivors,

either. I read *Sin City* for retribution, revenge, and retaliation. With all that said, I wish Wallace and Esther the best, and I look forward to the outcome in issue #9 to see if love does indeed endure.

Doug Amaturio

Loup_Garou@compuserve.com

Allow me a few moments to deviate from the usual avalanche of *Sin City* criticism/praise that you're assaulted with each month.

I recently met you again at the San Diego Comic-Con and attended your panel. After about three thousand questions concerning your work, the dialogue turned to artists' rights, and you spoke adamantly about the CBLDF (Comic Book Legal Defense Fund).

A couple of years prior, when I met you at yet another signing, you were championing this cause. At the time, I didn't appreciate how vital this issue was, and the information passed right over my head. But now, after hearing how some writers' work has been axed before it's able to reach the public (i.e., Kyle Baker's *Superbaby* spoof), it finally hit home that, indeed, the censorship sharks are circling ever closer to comic books.

You also made the vital point that the comics industry has a history of throwing in the towel before the battle even begins. As a writer who has finally won a nasty, drawn-out, nightmarish, four-year legal battle, I have a real, firsthand understanding of just how damn expensive these fights for justice are.

Needless to say, I immediately joined the CBLDF and proceeded to buy up just about everything you were auctioning off to benefit the Fund! Thanks for not wavering from your commitment all these years.

Oh, I just remembered: you mentioned to me that you like publishing the letters that rip on you, much more than you like publishing the "positive" ones. Let me see here . . . hmmm . . . Loved *Dark Knight*. Loved *Daredevil*. Absolutely adore *Sin City*. So what can I say here?

Oh, yeah . . . ! *Hated* your pink sneakers. Everyone who's anyone knows pink sneakers don't go with blue jeans . . . or do they?

Shit, I think they do.

Never mind, Frank. Keep fighting the good fight. All of us members are behind you.

Good man. But, hey, those Chucks were red, mister.

Elliot Rosen

Erial, NJ

I agree with Alex Le that you should do superhero comics. But I see your point.

I think your best stuff is the futuristic books you do, and I would like to see more. With or without superheroes.

Sixto Reynoso

SIXNETO@aol.com

What a delightful treat to read your book, *Hell and Back*—so far excellent. I hope it keeps going this

well. But I must also say those letters at the end of the book (ah . . . like this one) just kill me. It is funny to read your headers: “. . . but, heck, why not give it over to the angry folks once in a while?” Oh, that’s rich! Well, enough—good job. As always, this stuff is great—keep it up.

Oh, and, by the way, not only the Projects, but any place you create in your books can be as you want it to be—don’t let anybody tell you otherwise (not like you do), and keep doing your women as beautiful as you do. And if you could do a personal favor to a big fan, draw one of those beautiful women and let the world know she is Dominican (kind of a weird request, but you draw many looking like they are from here, and it would be kind of fun). Well, if you do it or not, it’s okay. Thanks for bringing to us, to me, great comic books.

Paul Dale Roberts
Silhouet9@aol.com

Bravo to Frank Miller’s *Hell and Back*. Enjoyed the surreal world that has been created to parallel the horrors of our own reality. With all the sex-change operations that are going on, it wouldn’t be surprising that this cop was a woman nine years ago. The sheer intensity of police brutality was shocking, to say the least. Esther’s world has been turned upside down with her new hairstyle, and her stomach must have turned too, when she heard that her face would have a touch-up to take away her ethnic identity. She has a perfect body that is marketable, but only marketable for the degenerates of the world. Her soul will be lost. Powerful drama that left me glued to my seat. The world of *Sin City* is a dark one.

Jackie Williams
grimace@unidial.com

For me, *Sin City* has always been about Frank Miller’s interpretation of the hard-boiled detective/crime novel. The first two issues of *Hell and Back* continue in this tradition, but in a more subtle way. Normally the primary character in Frank’s tales is immediately obvious as the weary, tough guy out to solve a case. In *Hell and Back*, Wallace has become a variant of the hard-boiled detective.

From his first appearance, he is a more sympathetic character than most of *Sin City*’s denizens, and instead of being embroiled in some mystery by his work-for-hire status, Wallace is involved by love and happenstance. Esther plays the role of the classic “dame” in trouble: she comes in like a force of nature and wraps Wallace up in a whirlwind of excitement and danger. Now Wallace is faced with the difficult task of determining who has taken Esther, why they have taken her, and where. The reader is left with all these questions as well as the additional puzzles of Wallace’s past and why Esther attempted suicide. In true crime-genre fashion, I suspect the answers to many of these questions will be simple yet shocking.

While remaining true to its hard-boiled roots, *Hell and Back* is also shaping up to be a classic love story.

Many instances in the story’s two beginning chapters point the reader in this direction. Portions of Wallace’s opening rescue of Esther, his immediate attraction to her, her swift reciprocity of his affections, and their cruel separation have been seen in classic literature, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, and in popular films, such as James Cameron’s *Titanic*. Evoking such images from other sources makes some artists’ products seem derivative and hollow. *Hell and Back*, like Frank’s previous projects, however, continues to push the boundaries of what stories comics can tell, while mixing literary genres and conveniences. In a time when comics mean superhero-superhero-superhero, I applaud anyone who tries something different.

If there is one thing I have learned in my lifetime of reading comics, it is that Frank Miller and *Sin City* are definitely different. As long as Frank continues to write *Sin City*, I’ll be along for the ride.

Stuart Rumbel
Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia

Just finished *H&B* #1. Being an artist myself, I’ve taken an instant liking to Wallace. I know that drawing for other people is never as satisfying (no matter what the reward) as drawing for yourself. And I’m looking for a girl like Esther, who “asks all the right questions.” You’ve already got me hooked.

Yet I remember reading a letter regarding the original *Sin City* tale, postulating that Marv represented Marvel, Goldie the Golden Age comics characters, etc. Forgive me if I’m wrong, but aren’t we seeing that same kind of allegory in *H&B*? Let’s look:

Wallace represents you. Esther embodies your readers—more than that, she is the perfect reader, who not only appreciates good art but treasures it. Like I do. I would have “suicided” (quit reading comics) long ago, if not for your work. And the kindly landlady Mrs. Mendoza is the embodiment of Dark Horse. Maybe even Diana Schutz? (Sorry, Di.) So here we are, artist and reader, and whom do we find menacing us from the shadows but . . . Dr. Fredric Wertham? I’m not sure who the shooter is, but he looks kinda familiar . . . it’ll come to me.

Is this kind of subtext deliberate, or is it just what I imagine after rereading the story too many times, waiting for the next issue? Anyway, keep up the good work, buddy.

[Mrs. Mendoza?! Sheesh! — Diana]

An enthusiastic recommendation: Get yourself a copy of Craig Thompson’s *Good-Bye, Chunky Rice*, published by Top Shelf productions. It’s a wonderfully dramatic, and, in the best sense, sweet story, superbly crafted. It’s Thompson’s first graphic novel, but you’d never know it. Watch out for this guy.

— FM



"It's just like they told me. Polly's good with the pliers."

GALLERY

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